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A BRIEF STUDY OF THE RUSSIAN LITURGY AND ITS MUSIC

By N. LINDSAY NORDEN

THE Russian Liturgy and its music is a subject upon which much might be written, for of all churches, there is none which can possibly compare with the Russian in regard to perfection of the system regulating the musical part of her services. Music plays a most important part in the liturgy; in fact, the service could not be performed without it. It is, therefore, necessary that every detail be carried out correctly, and that all elements combine to perfect the whole. Russian church music has been the admiration of visitors to Russia for years past, and many have declared it to be the most marvelous choral music known. Those who have heard it never forget it, so forceful and so wonderful is the impression it creates. Of the music itself, it appears that there has been more written for the Russian church than for any other. There are thousands and thousands of magnificent compositions as yet entirely unknown in this country. This music, however, differs so extensively in style, harmonic and melodic treatment, and in general conception from the religious music of other nations, that it requires a special and detailed study. One writer states:

The foundation of Russian music is the wonderful folk-song, which can be traced back to pagan times and which contains melodies of great variety, full of unexpected progressions, and expressive of every motion, and accent; almost savage in strength and spirit at times, but more often melancholy in character. The Russian people have not found their existence an altogether happy one, being oppressed by domestic tyrants and invaded by savage Asiatic enemies. The Russian sings at his work,—the peasant in the field, and the soldier in the army (for every company has a choir).

The imagination and emotion of the Russian people have found their freest expression in music.

There is a constantly increasing interest in this music, but while numerous acceptable performances of it are given, it is very evident that those responsible for such performances are not familiar with the style and spirit of the music. Many beautiful elements in this music are overlooked in such perfunctory renditions. The Russians have produced genuine, pure, ecclesiastical music,

whether old plainsong, or from the pen of a living composer,—which *is* church music. The music requires careful and serious study.

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When Russia accepted Christianity from the Greeks in the year 988, in the reign of Vladimir I, the interest in music became centered in religious music, which was the first music Russia herself produced. Prince Odeievski, a musician of great fame, said, in 1864, that the music of the Russian church is a treasure, whether considered from the spiritual, the historic or the artistic standpoint, and that no other nation in Europe could boast of having church songs in the very form in which they appeared at least seven centuries ago.

As is now well known, Russia has always excluded instrumental music from the liturgy of the church. In addition to this, the Council of Laodicea (343–81) imposed silence upon the congregation, so as to prevent the hymns and chants from being corrupted. Even to this day the congregation takes no part in the service as far as the music is concerned. This has given room for the development of a highly artistic ritual. The music of the Eastern church developed independently of the influence of Western Europe, and thus evolved original cadences, melodies, contrapuntal devices, etc. These elements, combined with others, have produced a remarkable condition in choral music in Russia. A superior type of choral music has been created, and choral effects far in advance of any other have been produced by Russian composers. The single fact that all church music in Russia is sung *a cappella* at once places it upon a very high plane, and the great number of voice parts and the use of the octavo-bass suffice to strengthen this position.

The first religious music was simply a kind of recitative, void of accent, rhythm or time, and generally within the limited compass of a few tones. Music of the same type may be heard to-day in the Greek monasteries. It was during the reign of Peter the Great that polyphony was introduced, at his direction. After the Italian influence began, the whole development was much retarded and neglected until the time of the Empress Elizabeth. In 1797 the Emperor Paul ordered only Russian compositions to be sung in the church. It was fortunate that the old religious chants had not been lost.

Maxim Sozonovich Berezovsky (1745–77) is considered to be the first composer who endeavored to free himself from the Italian

influence, and though his death is attributed to the partial failure of his efforts, his work is most important in the history of church music in Russia.

Bortniansky (1751-1825) who followed him is also a pioneer in this field. His works, nevertheless, are not thoroughly Russian in conception: the Italian influence is strong. Many of them are uninteresting and monotonous, although he has produced some splendid specimens of choral writing. The harmonies are usually very simple and there is a decided lack of development. As we pass from Bortniansky down through a list of many important composers, among whom are Turchaninoff, Lvoff, Glinka, Smolensky, Poliektoff, Arkhangelsky, Ippolitoff-Ivanoff, Tchesnokoff, Gretchaninoff and Kastalsky we find the music becoming more involved and more "national" in general treatment. Many of the modern composers have used the ancient church melodies and folk-songs as thematic material, upon which they have built up luscious and full modern harmonic structures. In this respect Rimsky-Korsakoff stands alone, for he made the music of the church thoroughly religious in character through the use of ancient melodies. While it is true that the early composers did not produce music which was thoroughly characteristic, it is also true that the modern composers have succeeded in producing works which are extremely individualistic in character and effect. In a group of one hundred compositions selected at random rarely will two be found alike in structure. Kastalsky is perhaps the greatest of all Russian church composers, if not of all church composers, yet it is indeed a most perplexing task to choose between him and Gretchaninoff, Nikolsky, or Tchesnokoff.

To find such a large group of great modern church composers is most remarkable. No other nation is able to boast of such a splendid group. The choral writing is of the very highest order. The anthems "From My Youth" by Kastalsky, "The Lord Said Unto My Lord" by Nikolsky, "O Gladsome Light" by Gretchaninoff, the "Nunc Dimittis" by Kastalsky or Tchesnokoff, the "Cherubim Song" by Tchesnokoff or Tchelischeff could not have been written outside of Russia. The musicianship, the scholarly treatment, and the remarkable part-writing are incomparable.

The reason that the choral music of other nations is forced to take a second place, is that the great majority of it is extremely instrumental in conception. It is the product of a keyboard style of composing. Perhaps this also explains why so much of the modern writing is uselessly chromatic in character. Composers here seem to have forgotten that extreme modulations are very

difficult for singers to perform, and that such modulations are unessential and do not form a legitimate part of true choral writing. It is also to be remembered that a well-trained chorus sings a *cappella* music in the so-called true or untempered (just) intonation, in which extreme modulations are almost impossible, and certainly undesirable. In untempered intonation the various positions of the chords, the major and minor forms, etc., all have more decided values than they have in tempered, or "out-of-tune" intonation. The Russian composer is, of course, educated musically under remarkable conditions. He hears only pure vocal music in church, and, in the majority of instances, outside the church,—for the influence of the church style has been strongly felt in secular choral music as well. The maintenance of large well paid choirs at the many cathedrals and churches gives ample opportunity for excellent renditions of difficult choral selections. Further, the liturgy is *all* music. Therefore, there is large opportunity for the performance of great quantities of music. Choirs are well paid as they are the sole means of having music in church. This permits sufficient rehearsing,—always unaccompanied rehearsing (the only genuine manner in which to rehearse). Accurate renditions are possible. The Holy Synod every month examines compositions for use in the church. Music which is secular in character or too florid is excluded. Thus only compositions of merit are permitted in the church. Such conditions approximate the ideal.

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There are three liturgies used in the Russian church, each of them so highly complex that only lengthy study would make their meaning clear. These are the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Liturgy of St. Basil and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. The Liturgy of Chrysostom is the normal Liturgy of the Eastern Church. St. Basil's Liturgy is used on all the Sundays in Lent (except Palm Sunday), Maundy Thursday, Easter Eve, Christmas and Epiphany Vigils and on the Feast of St. Basil (Jan. 1st). The Liturgy of Chrysostom is the union of two sets of material. The first is the ordinary Greek text of the Liturgy, as given in the Euchologion. This embraces the text and rubrics of the invariable portions of the office, without the variable portions, which constitute about one-third of every Liturgy celebrated; it also omits many hymns and responses by the choir, which are always sung except on Great Feasts, and which are, therefore,

universally known. The second is the *Egkolopion* (Manual) of *Raphtare*, which gives the texts and rubrics of the parts performed by the choir and the people. The original service was intended for monasteries, where the inmates gave their whole time to worshiping and praying. As it came to be used in churches much was condensed.

Before explaining the services it is essential to glance over the arrangement of the church, which is quite different from that customary in the West. The inside may be roughly divided into four parts: the Sanctuary, the long platform outside the image-screen, the body of the church and the porch. The Sanctuary faces the east, when at all possible. Parts of the service are performed inside the Sanctuary, with the Holy Doors closed. The Holy Doors are the main entrance to the Sanctuary from the platform in front of the image-screen. There is also a curtain inside these doors, and this is drawn aside at the beginning of the Liturgy. Part of the service is performed in the center of the church, the Bishop standing or sitting on the *Kathedra*, or *dias*. The Priests vary in number, from one or two, to as many as ten or twelve, on the Great Feasts: they perform part of their functions within the Sanctuary and part in the body of the church. It is forbidden to celebrate more than one Liturgy at any one altar in a single day, and also, no Priest is allowed to celebrate more than one Liturgy in any one day.

The worshipers stand in the body of the church, the men on the right and the women on the left. Many, as they enter, purchase candles, which they place in various parts of the church, in receptacles provided for them. Wax and pure oil are used for lighting, since they symbolize the purest of substances, but, of course, other artificial lights are also used for illumination. Lights are always used, even on the brightest days since they symbolize the truth that the Lord gives to the world the light of the spirit. Lights also vary with the importance of the service and at various stages of the service. All the lights are not lighted at the beginning of the Vigil Service,—a combination of Vespers and Matins,—but, as the service progresses, more and more are added, until the greatest illumination takes place at the singing of the *Gloria in Excelsis*. The illumination at the Liturgy proper is greater than at any other service.

The congregation, as before stated, makes no response. The service is performed by the Priest, the Deacon, the Reader, and the choir, in large churches divided into two groups. The Priest, except at the Communion, has little more than Exclamations and

Benedictions. The people join in only by crossing themselves and bowing at certain points, as after words like "Lord, have mercy" or "Let us attend!"

Services begin on the evening of the day before, as with the Jews. Vespers and Matins being combined into one service on the evening preceding a feast-day or Sunday, the Liturgy being said on the morning of the day itself.

The Vesper Service is so variable that only a general outline of it can be given here. When Matins follows Vespers which is the usual procedure, part of Vespers is omitted. Originally these services continued all night, but have been condensed to meet modern requirements. The Priest opens the service with a blessing and the choir immediately chants part of the 104th Psalm, "Praise the Lord," while the Priest, or Priest and Deacon cense the church. Vespers always begins with this psalm, for the reason that it recounts the wonders of Creation, and is, therefore, a fitting beginning for the complete performance of a day's divine worship, which, commencing with Vespers, concludes in the celebration of the Liturgy, in which the great act of Redemption is shown forth. During the singing of this psalm the Priest recites secretly certain prayers, called the "Prayers of Light." These prayers said before the Holy Doors, symbolize Adam standing repentently before the doors of heaven, and in uttering them the Priest prays for spiritual illumination.

Following this comes the Great Litany, the choir reciting the "Gospodi Pomilui," or "Lord, have mercy" to each of the petitions uttered by the Priest, or Deacon. The responses are most inspiring, the music lending itself admirably to use in the Episcopal and other churches. After a Gloria, the choir sings portions of the 1st and 2nd Psalms, beginning with "Blessed is the man" etc. These excerpts recall Adam's sorrow concerning his transgressions and his counsel to his children to obey the Lord's commandments. Tchaikowsky's, Arkhangelsky's, Rachmaninoff's and Ippolitoff-Ivanoff's settings of these psalms are among the finest.

The Little Litany now follows, the choir again responding with "Lord, have mercy." After this "Lord, I have cried unto Thee" is sung in the proper tone. This psalm is used on account of the thought contained in the second verse,—“Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as incense and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice.” Other appropriate psalms, recording prophetically the descent of the Redeemer into Hades on the evening of the day after His passion are subjoined. With the verses of these psalms are interspersed proper psalms com-

memorating the occasion. They are said in full only in monasteries, it being customary in church to use the first two and last two verses only, together with the Gloria.

The Hymn to the Birthgiver of God follows and during the singing of this hymn the Holy Doors are opened, the Priest and the Deacon standing before the doors, the Deacon censing the Holy Pictures. The Deacon announces "Wisdom, O believers," and the choir answers with the "O Gladsome Light," one of the oldest of the Latin hymns. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem is generally given credit for being its author. As the text of this hymn implies, the Gladsome Light was given forth to mortals in the person of Christ. During the singing of the anthem the Priest, preceded by the Deacon bearing a lighted taper enters the Sanctuary. The light is symbolical of the spiritual illumination brought by the Lord from heaven. The text of this, and its many settings, offers a splendid evening anthem for general use.

Following this the Gradual is sung. This is a verse preceding certain sections of the Scriptures. Except upon evenings preceding great feasts, but two or three verses are used. The verses relate to the thought expressed in the lesson or refer in some way to the day. The Parables themselves are only used on special occasions. The Greater Litany is now sung, followed by a few short responses. After this the appointed Canticles are sung in the tone proper for the day. The Nunc Dimittis follows, except upon certain special occasions when it is preceded by prayers called the Litiya. The settings of the Nunc Dimittis of the Russian Church are without question the finest settings of this famous hymn to be had. Kastalsky's for eight part chorus and baritone solo, Tchesnokoff's, or Gretchaninoff's, both in eight parts, are perhaps the finest. There is no Gloria following, but as it is unessential that a Gloria be sung in the Episcopal service, this fact will not bar these wonderful settings from use in that church.

The Trisagion, a Gloria, and the Lord's Prayer, all intoned by a Reader, follow. The tropar, or hymn of the feast is then sung, and at this point the Bread, Wine, or Oil, are blessed at the celebration of great feasts. The Priest offers a prayer to which the choir responds, "Blessed is the name of the Lord, world without end" three times. Psalm 34 is intoned, following which the Priest, standing before the Holy Doors, blesses the people.

After two short responses the Reader intones six psalms,—the 3rd, 38th, 63rd, (followed by a Gloria), the 88th, 103rd and the

143rd, during which prayers are said secretly within the Sanctuary, and in front of the Holy Doors. These psalms begin the celebration of Matins. The Great Litany follows, after which the choir sings "God is the Lord, and hath revealed himself unto us. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," the Deacon interposing certain verses. The Hymn of the Day and the Hymn to the Birthgiver of God follow and then selections from the Psalms, the Little Litany being sung after the first, and likewise after the second selection.

After an exclamation the Priest and Deacon cense the church while the choir sings "Praise the name of the Lord,"—verses from the 135th and 136th Psalms. There are many excellent settings of this text. On Saturday evenings there are certain hymns which follow, and also a hymn to the Birthgiver of God. The Degrees of the Antiphon are sung and the Graduals after which the Holy Gospels are read, the choir chanting before and after "Glory be to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee." The Holy Gospels are then brought to the centre of the church and are saluted by the Priests and the people. The Canon of the day follows, but is preceded on Great Feasts by the distribution of the Bread and Wine, which was blessed during Vespers. The Little Litany follows the third, and also the sixth, theme-song of the Canon. Before the ninth theme-song the Magnificat, with its refrains is sung, the Deacon standing meanwhile before the image of the Birthgiver of God and censing it. The Little Litany is again repeated preceding the Hymns of Light, so called because they have to do especially with spiritual illumination. Another hymn to the Birthgiver of God is sung, and immediately after the morning hymn,—"Glory be to God on high," etc., ending with the Thrice Holy. Hymns of Dismissal follow, these being sung in the proper tone. The Greater Litany, a Benediction by the Priest, and the "Many Years," bring the service to an end, the Holy Doors being closed at this time.

The length of time necessary to perform this service depends upon the importance of the occasion. When elaborate forms are used as on Great Feasts, when everything is used in full, the service is almost twice as long as it is on ordinary occasions.

The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is divided into three parts. First, the Office of Oblation, in which the Bread and Wine are prepared; second, the Liturgy of the Catechumens, consisting of anthems, responses and prayers; and, third, the Liturgy of the Faithful, which is the Communion itself. The first part concerns itself principally with the Priests within the Sanctuary; the second

and third parts are those which contain the music. The Bishop enters and is vested by the clergy while standing upon his dais in the centre of the church. During this the choir sings, very slowly and with great dignity, a number of verses, the words of which are particularly beautiful and rich in poetic feeling. The Bishop then gives the signal to begin in the words, "Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen." The Deacon comes forth, and taking his place in front of the Holy Doors, says the Great Litany, while the choir responds, "Gospodi Pomilui," or "Lord, have mercy." These responses form one of the most inspiring parts of the Liturgy. Sometimes they are in simple four-part harmony, but on great occasions they are most elaborate. Arkhangelsky's and Kastalsky's settings are splendid, but perhaps Rachmaninoff's is the most unique. In this case the choir sustains the closing tone in three octaves, while the Deacon intones upon this tone. The effect is beautiful!

Following the Litany, the First Antiphon is sung. This consists of part of the 103rd Psalm,—*"Bless the Lord, O my soul,"*—except upon certain feasts. While this is being sung prayers are said secretly by the Priests within the Sanctuary. By these Psalms the Incarnation of the Word is understood to be foretold. At the end of the Psalm the Deacon, returning again before the Holy Doors, recites the Little Litany, while the choir responds "Lord, have mercy" after each supplication. The Second Antiphon,—the next response in the Liturgy,—is generally omitted. The text is Psalm 146. This is followed by the anthem, "Only Begotten Son," called the Hymn of Justinian (527-65), celebrating the perfect completion of grace in the Son of God Incarnate, with all His work for our salvation, and including adoration of the Virgin Mother. The Third Antiphon begins with the prayer of penitent thief on the cross, "In Thy Kingdom, remember us Lord, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom," followed by the Beatitudes. Of this text there are also many fine settings. This commemorates the Saints who died a holy death, and last of all, Christ. The Prayer of the Third Antiphon has come into the English Book of Common Prayer, but just how, is not clear.

The Little Entrance is now made, the Priest following the Deacon, preceded by a lighted taper. This light is symbolic of our Lord as the Light of the World, and the Entrance signifies the entering of Christ upon His work. After they have entered the Sanctuary, the Deacon elevates the Gospels and announces in a loud voice, and with great dignity, "Wisdom, O believers!"

recalling the Resurrection. As the Gospels are laid upon the altar, the choir chants "O come, let us worship, and fall down before Christ, Save us, O Son of God, who rose for us from the dead, as we sing unto Thee; Alleluia."

The Proper Hymn and the Collect, which are now sung, are performed in old plain-song. These tones are simple melodies, sung in harmony, and their rendition is exceedingly beautiful and uplifting on account of their extreme simplicity and purity of style. Every week in the Church Year includes the singing of one of these tones. They do not resemble the Gregorian tones or the chants of other Slavonic nations. The Russian tones are written in modern notation upon a staff of five lines, in the G clef, whereas the Ambrosian and Gregorian chants use only four lines, with a C-or F-clef. The music in some old Russian manuscript books bears strong marks of antiquity, for there are no lines and the characters are different from those used since the time of Guido. As early as the 12th century the Russians had a notation of their own. The Russian Church uses Greek chants frequently in its services, and many compositions modern in character are based on these chants. They are very simple and direct in their appeal. In addition to the Greek chants, other chants of particular localities, as used in certain monasteries are used in the service. The Kieff chant is one of these, and is used particularly in Lent. The idea of having eight tones is, of course, of Grecian origin, although the Greeks do not use harmony, but prefer the unison usage, while the Russian Church uses full harmony. The ancient Greek modes are to be found among these chants.

After the "Alleluia" the Priest blesses the Gospels with the sign of the Cross, symbolizing the illumination both in heaven and in earth through the Incarnation of Jesus, with His two natures. The choir then sings the Trisagion, "O Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Eternal, have mercy," three times, with a Gloria, and then again very slowly. The Trisagion is one of the oldest parts of the Liturgy, dating from before the time of St. Proclus. This proclaims the mystery of the Trinity, manifested to men by one of its persons, and also the sympathy and union between men and angels.

The Bishop then takes his seat on the throne at the rear of apse, and blesses the people with the trikerion. The Priests and Deacons are seated beside him. The Gradual is now read representing the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, brought to pass, after the Ascension, by the hands of the Disciples. The Gospel and Epistle now follow, the Bishop and Priests standing

during the former. Before the reading incense is offered. The Deacon then takes the Book of Gospels and, passing through the Holy Doors, places it upon the tribune, while the Priest exclaims, "Wisdom, O believers! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel." The Gospel is then read by the Deacon, and its reading is very impressive, for he begins in his deepest tones, and gradually raises his voice higher and higher, until at the end he has covered a range of at least two octaves. The Gospel is preceded and followed by the sentence "Glory to the Lord," sung by the choir. The Bishop now blesses with dikerion and the trikerion, and the Litany of Fervent Supplication is said, with the choir responds, "Lord, have mercy," three times after each prayer. The Litany of the Catechumens now follows, and the faithful are exhorted to remain, this moment representing the end of the world.

Several "Amens" and short responses now follow, while prayers are said secretly within the Sanctuary. Then comes the Cherubim Song, a text of great antiquity. It is found in the chief Eastern liturgies before the Great Entrance, and is generally ascribed to the time of Justinian, who directed that it be sung in churches. It has been part of the Greek Liturgy since 600 A. D. This anthem is perhaps the best known portion of the Liturgy and the first to be used to any extent here. It is to be regretted that in certain English editions, there have been words written which have no relation to the meaning of the original text. The music of some of the settings is most elaborate. The first part of the song is always sung very slowly. Between the first and second parts, distinguished by a change in the spirit and tempo of the music, the Priest utters the prayer of the penitent thief. The joyous tone of the second part is occasioned by a military figure—the elevation of the Host being likened to the elevation of a king upon his shield by the soldiery. Between the two halves the Great Entrance is made, and the Holy Gifts are taken from the table of oblation at the Altar. Priests, Deacons and Readers go in procession, preceded by lighted tapers. This symbolizes the last advent of Christ upon earth, when he shall come with glory. Then all the faithful fall down before the Priests, partly desiring their prayers and partly venerating the Divine Gifts. The choir sings the "Many Years," followed by a short litany. The Doors are closed immediately after the Great Entrance, for it is not fitting that the Mystery should be observed by any outside of the priesthood. The Symbol of Faith, or Creed, follows and some inspiring settings are to be found here. That of Gretchaninoff, for alto solo, with a choral background, of eight parts

is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, that has ever been composed in any country at any time. Rachmaninoff's setting contains some remarkable writing, and Tchaikowsky's must not be overlooked. Sometimes the Creed is rendered in simple plain-song and this setting is also inspiring.

The Kiss of Peace is now given, and the "Mercy of Peace" is sung. Many prayers are said secretly within the Sanctuary by the Priests, while the choir sings, "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give our thanks to Thee, and pray to Thee, O Lord, our God." Following this the Hymn to the Birthgiver of God is sung. Tchaikowsky's is the only setting now available in English.

The prayers for the Synod and for the people now follow, and a short Litany is sung, with the usual responses by the choir. Then the Priest exhorts the people to praise God with one mind and one heart, and thus leads up to the Lord's Prayer. Here the people kneel and the whole ceremony is most impressive and is always spoken of by visitors to the Russian Cathedral in New York as having impressed them very greatly. A few short responses follow, and then the doors are closed and the curtain is drawn. The choir sings the Communion Anthem. Ordinarily this is, "Praise the Lord from heaven, praise Him in the heighth, Alleluia," but other texts are used freely. The Communion takes place, after the proper preparation, and the Holy Doors are opened. During this the choir sings, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; God is the Lord and hath made Himself known to men," and, "Receive the body of Christ, taste of the fountain of life." At the close "Alleluia" is sung. Then the Bishop blesses with the dikerion and trikerion, and, after several short responses and some prayers within the Sanctuary, the 34th Psalm is read by the Reader, and the Priest pronounces the final Benediction.

It is impossible to explain the details of the entire liturgy, or the directions for variance on different occasions. For example, the description briefly given above is of a Pontifical service, which differs to some degree from an ordinary service. The whole is very complex, and would admit of a lengthy discussion. The entire service is so bound up with the music and the incomparable impression which it makes upon an auditor, that any written description must fail to convey a sense of the splendor of the whole service. The music alone is able to convey an adequate description; words are insufficient.

The music of the Russian Liturgy is in the opinion of many musicians, the most beautiful ecclesiastical music which the world has ever known. To Western ears, accustomed to organ accom-

paniment,—or rather, organ domination—the pure *a cappella* style sounds strange, and perhaps, at first, even limited. But, having passed this point, the intrinsic beauty and splendor of this music is at once perceptible. There is so much music in the Liturgy,—in fact, the Liturgy is all music—that the composer must skillfully use means so that the complete service may not become monotonous.

A great quantity of the music is in more than four voice-parts,—frequently in as many as ten or twelve. When a four-part structure is used the addition of the octavo-bass, singing an octavo below the written bass, adds a fifth part. The use of many voice-parts is one of the principal charms of this music. Four-part writing is too thin for unaccompanied voices, and limits the composer too greatly. The addition of the octavo-bass gives a foundation to the other parts which is remarkable. After hearing a number of such renditions, a simple four-part structure seems extremely thin and frail, and without foundation. The use of many parts presents great solidity and strength, and gives the composer the opportunity for the freest expression. On account of the fact that there is no instrumental background, everything must be dealt with chorally. This has given rise to remarkable effects. Some of the principal devices are worthy of note.

The soprano and alto parts are frequently discontinued for a period, and the tenors and basses sing a four-part harmony, or, the altos sustain a tone for a group of measures, while the men's voices give forth a moving phrase against this sustained tone. The contrast is remarkable. An example from Gretchaninoff's "Praise the Name of the Lord" is given:

Ex. I

SOP. & ALTO

ff

Al - - le - lu - i - a. - - - - - *etc.*

TEN. & BASS

ppp

Al - - le - lu - i - a, al-le-lu - -

2 SOPRS. & 2 ALTOS

O praise the name of the Lord. *etc.*

CHORUS SOP. & ALTO

p O praise the name of the Lord.

Frequently in eight-part writing the first soprano and the first tenor, and the second soprano and second tenor are written in octaves. This gives great solidity to the structure and strengthens the melody by doubling in the octave. An example from Gretchaninoff's setting of the "Cherubim Song" is given: often the 1st tenor part is written on the soprano staff in octaves with that voice.

Ex. II

SOP.

borne, Al-le-lu - i - a, al-le-lu - *etc.*

ALTO

borne, Al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i -

TEN.

borne, Al-le-lu - i - a, al-le-lu -

BASS

borne, Al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i -

There is an extensive use of pianissimo singing, particularly in veiled and subdued tones. Contrast is a vital element in this music. The melodic passage in such cases may be found in the tenor or bass part, while the sopranos and altos give forth long sustained, veiled harmonies. This is a feature peculiar to this music. Church music does not make its strongest appeal, or best fulfill its mission in those compositions which are lively and rhythmical, shouted vigorously perhaps by a large chorus. There is always associated with things heavenly and divine, a certain spirit of gentleness, beauty and tranquillity. More hearts are turned to the Church for consolation and comfort, than in a spirit of rejoicing. Such an atmosphere is created only by the mystery

of a pianissimo tone. An example from Kastalsky's "O Gladsome Light," the Evening Hymn, is given:

Ex. III
SOP. & ALTO * (These notes to be softly sustained for ten measures)
TEN. & BASS

p O glad-some light, *mp* O glad-some light of the ho-ly
glo-ry of the Fa-ther, im-mor-tal, heavnly, ho-ly, bless-ed Je-sus Christ.

Another usage which is peculiar to the Russian Church music is the writing of the soprano and bass parts in octaves while the inner parts sustain tones, which serve to complete the harmony. This is a majestic effect! Two examples are given, one from Tchelishoff, and the other from Tchaikowsky,—both settings of the "Cherubim Song."

Ex. IV (a) (b)
SOP. *ff* *etc. ff*
ALTO *ff* *ff*
TEN. *ff* *ff*
BASS *ff* *ff*

That the King of all we may raise on high. That the King of all we may raise on high.
That the King of all we may raise on high. That the King of all we may raise on high.
That the King of all we may raise on high. That the King of all we may raise on high.
That the King of all we may raise on high. That the King of all we may raise on high.

Frequently all the parts save one, sing very softly and in long-sustained tones, while the single part repeats a tone, sharply accenting it. In many cases this task is assigned to the altos. An example from Tchesnokoff's "Nunc Dimittis" is given:

Ex. V
SOP.

Light, to be a light, to be a light, and to be the

ALTO

Light, and to be a light, to be a light, and to lighten the Gentiles, and to be a light to

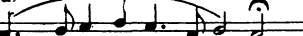
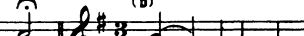
TENOR

Light, to be a light, to be a light, and to be the

BASS

Light, to be a light, to be a light, and to be the

An unusual procedure in the matter of the cadences lies in the use of the seventh chord on the second degree of the scale to the tonic chord, instead of the customary dominant seventh-tonic close. In fact, the two-seven chord seems to sum up the whole atmosphere of Russian Church music,—particularly this chord in the minor mode, where it is actually awe-inspiring. An example from Kastalsky's "Praise Thou, The Lord" (major) and one from Tchaikowsky's "We Praise Thee" (minor) are given:

Ex. VI (a)  (b) 

It is impossible to give here any number of the remarkable cadence-effects to be found in this music, so many are there, but these below will suffice to show some of the more striking ones, as well as some general peculiarities. The customary dominant-seventh-tonic ending or the sub-dominant-tonic ending so very frequent in the Western music, are neglected to advantage. This, of course, given considerable additional scope and effect to the music.

Ex. VII

SOP. & ALTO (a)

SOP. I & II (b)

(a) SOP. & ALTO

TEN. & BASS

ALTO

TEN. & BASS

Ex. VII

SOP. & ALTO (a)

SOP. I & II (b)

(a) SOP. & ALTO

TEN. & BASS

ALTO

TEN. & BASS

SOP. (d)

TENOR (e)

ALTO

BASS

SOP. & ALTO (f)

etc. TEN. & BASS

The constant use of "open" fifths is very suggestive of the infinite, with its mysteries. Often rich and full harmonic passages terminate suddenly in an "open" fifth, or in a unison. This produces a weird effect. It seems to suggest the ever presence of fate, for it repeatedly brings to mind the fact that all magnificence must eventually return to the simplest elements from which it emanated. Thus a gorgeous harmony fades off in a moment to a simple fifth, or even the simpler unison. An example from Nikol-sky's "Praise the Name of the Lord" is given:

SOP. & ALTO

Ex. VIII

TEN. & BASS

Al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i - a, O give

Al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i - a,

thanks un-to the God of heav - en, for His mer - cy en - dur - eth for eér. etc.

ff

Al - le -

Much of the music is written in free rhythm, that is without bar lines, save at the end of the phrases. Occasionally an author inserts dotted bar lines to indicate strong pulses, but, of course, in this case the measures are of varying lengths. This use of the bar line is a very proper one, although it presents temporary difficulties to singers. The ends of the phrases are shown by this method, and the feeling of regular measure lengths is

destroyed. A short excerpt from Tchesnokoff's "Salvation is Created" is given:

Ex. IX

Sal - va - tion

Sal - va - tion is cre - a - ted, sal - va - tion etc.

The chanting of the low bass parts against a sustained harmony in some or all of the upper voices is another splendid effect. This gives a feeling of great profundity, or of awe and terror. This element again bears witness to the fact that the Russian composers fully appreciate the possibilities of the bass voice in choral music. The treatment of the bass part is such as would unfailingly interest any bass singer. It does not consist merely in supporting the upper voices, but the writing for this part gives it ample opportunity for interesting work. In fact, many of the unusual effects lie in the exceptional treatment of the bass voice, or the bass and tenor voices. A decided advance in choral music will be made here when the extreme importance of the bass voice is thoroughly appreciated and composers write for it with that appreciation well in mind. It is not unusual to find three bass parts in Russian choral music. The foundation this gives is superb! It is impossible to quote the whole men's chorus from Kastalsky's "From My Youth," but the reader is earnestly recommended to study this wonderful composition which contains many remarkable choral effects on every page. Two short passages are given:

Ex. X

TENOR I

up, be with - ered up.

TENOR II

up, be with - ered up.

BASS I

up, be with - ered up, be with - ered up. Glo - ry to Fa - ther,

BASS II

up, be with - ered up, be with - ered up. Glo - ry to Fa - ther,

etc. SOPRANO *pp*
ness, ev - 'ry soul,

ALTO *pp*
ness, ev - 'ry soul,

etc. TENOR
Son and Ho-ly Spir-it, now, and for - ev-er and ness,

BASS *p*
Son and Ho-ly Spir-it, now, and for - ev-er and ness, and the Tri-une U-ni-

ppp
ev - 'ry soul in mys - tic ho - li - ness!

ppp
ev - 'ry soul in mys - tic ho - li - ness!

ppp
in mys - tic ho - li - ness!

ppp
ty doth il - lu - mine it in mys - tic ho - li - ness!

In the anthem "The Lord Said Unto My Lord," by Nikolsky, the basses are the most important singers in the entire chorus. The whole structure is most unusual and should be studied in detail. The basses constantly reiterate a theme to the words of "The Lord said unto my Lord."

Another short excerpt from the Christmas Song, "On This Day," a Bulgarian Chant, is given. This is written for five bass voices. The effect obtained is very different from the ordinary effect of tenors and singing together.

Ex. XI
BASS 1,2,3
p
On this day etc.

BASS 4,5
p

All these peculiarities require keen appreciation of choral tone, for the group of voices are required to give forth almost as much variety of tone-color as does an orchestra. Merely commonplace tone utterance is uninteresting in a *cappella* singing, although it may suffice when organ accompaniment is used. This *is* choral music in the fullest sense of the word. The intentions of the composer are not so very evident on paper, but are discernible after careful study of the characteristics which prevail. The music possesses a marked individuality and, if properly rendered, is extremely beautiful, but loses the greater part of its appeal if improperly rendered.

The ancient modes are to be found extensively and rare effects are produced by their use. Observe the opening phrase in Kastalsky's "O Gladsome Light," which is in the old Æolian mode. In order to avoid any confusion as to the mode Kastalsky writes the anthem with one sharp, "F", and adds the "C" sharp necessary for the Æolian tonality of "B" minor as it occurs throughout the piece. The customary "B" minor with its raised 7th step, "A" sharp, cannot be confused with this more beautiful form. This is an excellent method, for there is no signature for the customary minor mode. The actual key signature for this composition, did not tradition forbid, would be "F" and "C" sharps, but very likely no music publisher would assume the responsibility for printing such a signature.

The Mixolydian mode, or mode of the fourth, is to be found in Kastalsky's "God Is With Us." The tonic is "F", and the scale F, G, A, B flat, C, D, E flat, F. Two short excerpts are given:

Ex. XII
SOP.

The musical score is for four voices: Soprano (SOP.), Alto (ALTO), Tenor (TEN.), and Bass (BASS). It is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "God is with us! O ye nations, un-derstand; etc." The Soprano part begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a melodic line. The Alto part follows with a similar melodic line. The Tenor part has a more active, rhythmic line. The Bass part provides a harmonic foundation with a steady eighth-note pattern. The lyrics are written below each staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across measures.

God is with us! O ye na - - tions, un-derstand;
 God is with us! O ye na - - tions, un-derstand; etc.
 God is with us! O ye na - - tions, un-derstand;
 God is with us! O ye na - - tions, un-derstand;

selves; _____ for God _____ is _____ with us!
 selves; _____ for God _____ is _____ with us! *etc.*
 selves; _____ for God _____ is _____ with us!
 selves; _____ for God _____ is _____ with us!

The necessity of procuring low basses seems to have offered temporary difficulties in presenting this music. It is, however, erroneously supposed that low basses are not to be found outside of Russia. The whole tendency of Anglican and American choral music has been to force the bass voice upwards in its register. Vocal students, therefore, have been interested in developing the upper range of their voices in order to meet these requirements in seeking positions. There are many such students who possess excellent low registers, but who have never discovered them. The majority of low basses at present are to be found in men's glee clubs, where this voice is an absolute necessity. The low bass voice, in fact, is a feature essential not only to Russian ecclesiastical music, but to all choral music. Composers are coming to realize the importance of these deep voices and are beginning to write low "C's",—a thing entirely unheard of until Russian church music came to be known here! In many of the Russian compositions the second bass parts—called the octavo-bass—are written down as low as A and G below low C. But whether the composer writes this part or not, the octavo-bass sings in octaves with the written bass part as far as it is possible for him to do, except when the harmony is such that this part would alter the effect intended. The value of this voice in pure choral music cannot be overestimated. A four-part structure with the addition merely of the octavo-bass produces new effects.

Russian church music presents new difficulties to both director and singers. The greatest problem of a *cappella* rendition is, of course, to produce a smooth unified ensemble,—a result which is very rarely attained. The usual result of choral ensemble is

the effect of four independent elements, which parallel but do not unify. To secure a unification of vocal parts the most painstaking rehearsing must be undertaken, and singers must have a full consciousness of the function of the part to which they are assigned. They must be able to form intervals of thirds, fourths, etc., with other voices readily. The second sopranos, or second tenors, must be able to maintain their part when it separates from the first of the same part. The bass part is perhaps the most difficult of all the parts for it has a twofold function to perform,—harmonic and melodic. This part, as before noted, frequently divides into three sections.

Each singer must be trained to listen to the other parts, and be conscious of the relation his or her part bears to the whole structure. Choirs which have been accustomed to rehearse with a piano, and give all renditions with organ support, will find it difficult to begin *a cappella* singing. Out-of-tune singing will be the greatest difficulty perhaps, and following upon this will come a marked roughness of ensemble. The only method of overcoming these, and other difficulties, which will present themselves, is to rehearse entirely without an instrument, even if part of the music has to be rendered with accompaniment. As far as possible difficult passages should be played upon the rehearsal piano, but the singers should not sing with the piano, but merely listen to the phrase, and then sing it after it has been given on the instrument. All of this process takes time, but the results which will be attained in the end will more than compensate for the time and effort consumed. The beauty of *a cappella* singing by a really fine choir is incomparable. Relatively few people have ever heard such singing. It is of the very highest artistic order. Accompanied singing seems tame and lifeless after it. It is only a question of time before many of our churches will develop this field of religious music and congregations will come to know it. It is principally a matter of education.

Professor Edward Dickinson in his book, "Music in the History of the Western Church" states these facts clearly:

The usages of chorus singing in the present era do not prepare singers to cope with the peculiar difficulties of the *a cappella* style; a special education and an unwonted mode of feeling are required for an appreciation of its appropriateness and beauty. Nevertheless, such is its inherent vitality, so magical is its attraction to one who has come into complete harmony with its spirit, so true is it an exponent of the mystical submissive type of piety, which always tends to reassert itself in a rationalistic age like the present, that the minds of churchmen are gradually returning to it, and scholars and musical directors are tempting it forth

from its seclusion. . . . Little by little the world of culture is becoming enlightened in respect to the unique beauty and refinement of this form of art. . . .

There is frequently a false accusation made against Russian church music. It is this,—that it is beautiful, but very depressing and melancholy in character. Those who make such a statement do not understand this music, which many contend to be on a much higher plane than the religious music of other nations. Then, too, the absence of noisy instrumental accompaniment is very marked at first. The listener is in a new realm, in which he finds everything strangely beautiful. An opinion formed at such a time is valueless. The contrast between this genuine ecclesiastical music and the inferior type of material generally used in churches, and to which the ordinary individual has become accustomed, is, indeed, very sharp. But, after some contact with this better music, anything less artistic is unsatisfactory and elementary. To reach this higher stage of æsthetic appreciation it is necessary to hear good *a cappella* renditions at least once a week, for a year. The Rev. Turchineff, writing on this topic, said:

The value of church singing is this—it relieves man's soul from the oppression of sorrow. When it is perfectly intelligible it easily affords an escape to the scum life deposits in our hearts. . . . It is true they (Russian religious chants) are sorrowful. Yet this sorrow is not of oppression, but of regret, that we are still so far from the ideal, from holiness and divinity. The consciousness of our sinfulness blends with the longing to become one with our Saviour, suffering now for us. Yet the whole of reconciliation has been granted to us and so the final chord sounds solemn and triumphant.

If those who have thought Russian Church music melancholy and depressing will examine such pieces as the "Easter Verses" of Smolensky, "Praise the Name of the Lord" by P. Ivanoff, or A. T. Gretchaninoff, or "God is With Us," by Kastalsky,—as well as others—they will discover in these selections a joyous, happy spirit, but no cheap, rhythmic, commonplace writing, intended to catch the ear. Nevertheless, there is appropriate music for all of the church's celebrations,—music which is within the keeping of the spirit of the service, but always dignified and uplifting.

There seems to be a general misapprehension as to just what church music should be. The field of religious music has become saturated with compositions which are more secular than churchly: they do not fit into the ritual of the service. When they are performed it seems as though the ritual had been temporarily interrupted to permit such performance. Sweet, cloying, sugary

harmonies certainly have no place in church, yet here are hundreds of such pieces regularly used in churches, by musical directors who ought to know better. The Russian style is devotional and thoroughly serious. It is not trivial and sing-songy. It possesses the qualifications of any good church music,—devotion, reverence, lofty conception, and inspiration. It is on this account that one frequently hears the name of Palestrina connected with the music of the Russian church. Palestrina's writing was on the same plane, save that the Russians have composed at a later period in the world's history, and their art is therefore more highly developed. Great praise is due the Russian church for having permanently excluded instrumental accompaniment from her services, if one may judge by her high standard and complete musical system. Perhaps, had the American churches attempted this ideal, we might now possess a well established ecclesiastical choral art.

The general public has no well defined view as to what is artistic church music and what is not. Those who have a developed musical appreciation, however, have, and it is these people who attend our best orchestral and choral concerts, and who stay away from church music. The standard maintained at such concerts is generally much higher than those the church choirs maintain. There is a general indifference about the whole matter. Only a very few churches are seriously concerned about their music. Unaccompanied music, properly presented, is the most inspiring of all forms of choral music. Further, such music is the nearest to musical perfection, for the chords in this case ARE the chords of nature, unaltered,—just as nature gave them to man. The *a cappella* chorus is one of the very few methods of producing pure music. Those who have never had the privilege of hearing such music,—and in this group are to be found the great majority of American musicians,—have no conception of the supreme beauty of untempered harmonies. The author has questioned many reputable musicians and has learned that they have had no experience in such music. Investigators in this field, however, are unanimous in their staunch support of pure harmonies, and they are in a position to judge.¹

At the present time church music in general is the worst choral music produced, and there can be no doubt that a great deal of thought and study will be required before those who are responsible for this matter can be brought to realize the possibili-

¹See the author's article, entitled "A Plea for Pure Church Music," in THE MUSICAL QUARTERLY for April, 1918.

ties before them. At present things must be "bright" and "popular" or "pleasing." So the poor old "Holy City" and "Messiah" and the "Crucifixion" are a regular feast in our churches, for the people know them, and *must* have them! Conceive, if you will, an orchestral conductor obliged to construct his programs on such a false and impossible basis!

The interest in Russian church music has been developing here for approximately five years, and in this time has made remarkable progress. The rendition of this music has greatly improved those choral bodies which undertook the study of it, and also brought out the fact that the public is interested in high class religious music. This music, therefore, has been the source of great uplift in the religious music of the country. The choral societies on the whole have done much, if not more, than the church choirs, in developing an interest. These societies are very much alive and on the alert for the best that there is in the choral field. The same cannot be said,—it is to be regretted—about the majority of church choirs, where the usual problem is to get something ready for Sunday services. Thousands of visitors to the Russian Cathedral in New York City hear¹ this marvelous music, without realizing that they can have the same music performed regularly in their own churches, should they make the demand. There are many churches where sufficient funds are available for maintaining high standards, should the people demand them. When an orchestra fails to maintain a certain standard the press and public at once make vigorous comments. It would be a very splendid policy if others would make an outcry against the music some of the best churches put regularly on their programs. No choir can afford to neglect the music of the Russian church. There are many selections of surpassing beauty, which any good choir may offer, provided that they are willing to study the music seriously, and also provided that the director is willing to cope with the difficulties of *a cappella* singing. No one who has ever heard Russian church music properly rendered can refrain from an expression of admiration and exaltation. Lecturers on Russia, authors of books on Russia, travelers, musicians, critics, clergy and others all say the same thing. Is any further recommendation necessary?

¹The choir has been temporarily disbanded.—*Ed.*